



# Wellhead Protection Conservation Easement Program, Phase 1 (FY 2010/2011).



**Clean Water Funds:**  
\$1M (FY10); \$1.3M (FY11)

Grant	\$1M (FY10) \$1.3M (FY11)
Leveraged Funds*	N/A
Total Budget	\$2.3M

\* Leveraged Funds include required  
25% local match

**Project Sponsor:**

Minnesota Board of Water & Soil  
Resources (BWSR)

**Partners:**

MN Department of Health (MDH),  
Minnesota Soil & Water Conservation  
Districts

**Grant Period:**

2010/2011

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## Project Narrative

This program is a part of a comprehensive clean water strategy to prevent sediment and nutrients from entering our lakes, rivers, and streams; enhance fish and wildlife habitat; protect groundwater and wetlands. Specifically the Wellhead Protection Conservation Easement program is targeted to protect drinking water through the Reinvest in Minnesota Program (RIM). In partnership with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and Soil and Water Conservation Districts, permanent conservation easements are purchased in areas where the vulnerability of the drinking water is designated as high or very high.

In 1986, the Reinvest in Minnesota Resources Act was enacted to restore certain marginal and environmental sensitive agricultural land to protect soil and water quality and support fish and wildlife habitat.

Utilizing the RIM conservation easement program, this program focused on converting agricultural land presently in production to native grasslands and wetlands in areas where the vulnerability of the drinking water is designated as high or very high by MDH.

Restoring native grasslands within wellhead protection areas improves water quality by providing greater distance between drinking water sources and agricultural chemical use. Changing land use from agricultural production to restored grasslands and wetlands has produced dramatic, measurable improvements in drinking water quality.

Lands that were targeted were new or existing USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts with cropping history. The easements funded under this program are permanent, whereas CRP easements are for 10-15 years. Participating landowners receive a payment to retire land in agricultural production and to establish buffers of native vegetation.

Minnesota currently has just over 200,000 acres of Conservation Reserve Program easements in buffer practices at various stages of their 10-15 year contracts, some soon to expire. The drinking water and wellhead protection initiative compliments other programs, both existing and yet to be developed, over the next 25 years.

## Proposed Measurable Outcomes

Land use conversion from agricultural land to conservation cover provided on 650 acres of high or very high vulnerable wellhead areas.

## Actual Measurable Outcomes

Currently, 8 easements in 4 counties totaling 644.9 acres are either in process or recorded, with additional easement applications on the way.

## Evaluation and Outcome Plans

Each project area is reviewed by a panel consisting of MN Dept. of Health, MN Rural Water Association and MN BWSR as it relates to the approved Wellhead Protection Plan for the wellhead area. When an easement for land use change is an appropriate solution to the vulnerability of the aquifer, the project is recommended for approval and begins the process of conversion. MN Dept. of Health reviews the status of wellhead plans and progress being made to implement protection strategies on an ongoing basis. RIM easements are subject to ongoing inspection to ensure compliance for the duration of the easement in accordance with established guidelines.

# RIM Wellhead Protection Conservation Easements \*

## *Drinking Water Supply Management Areas designated as high or very high vulnerability*

